1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



586 732 no difficulty in getting wives to stay with them. Dwarfs, on the other hand, not only find it hard to get wives except their elder brothers' widows, but are passed over in the succession to a post of responsibility or the management of a family. Madness is particularly dreaded, and would certainly involve the elopement of a wife. But husbands, though they would divorce a mad [833] woman *a thoro*, would still maintain them; sexual intercourse with a mad woman is believed to result in complete loss of virility. 586 I have heard of no case in which a husband has divorced his wife; she may be frigid or barren or in other ways unsatisfactory, but so long as she is not unfaithful her husband is expected to maintain her, and his remedy is to seek another co-wife, often getting her younger sister or parallel-cousin as compensation for her falling [674] short of expectations. The murder of wives in sudden fits of temper for petty shortcomings is unfortunately common among the Bison-horn Marias, though almost unknown in the hills. Nor must it [837] be assumed that because Bison-horn wives often elope, their husbands tamely submit to infidelity; the detection of an intrigue often results in the husband killing the wife or her paramour, though once a wife has made good her escape to another man's house the [593] husband usually accepts the *fait accompli*. The beating or ill-treatment of wives is strongly condemned by all Marias.

[See cat. 116, p. 425. – Analyst]

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Paik Saral Penur Rai [Lingo's father's brother's son]
Aik Saral Penur Rai [Lingo's brother]
Tograjdeo Penur Rai [Lingo's brother]
Perma Mudial Penur Rai [Lingo's mother's brother]
Bhumrandari Penur Rai [Lingo's elder brother's wife]
Pordegumal Penur Rai [Lingo's daughter's husband]
Nulemuttai Penur Rai [Lingo's sister]
Poche Dokara Penur Rai [Lingo's brother]
Maria Moghraj Penur Rai [Lingo's brother]
Kokal Bidral Penur Rai [Lingo's brother]
Kurumtala Penur Rai [Lingo's brother [1]]

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By this time the reader probably feels that he has had enough. But he need not fear that I propose to take him much further into the intricate and often contradictory relationships of the Muria gods. The subject needs a book to itself and an investigator deeply interested in the theology of primitive peoples. All I wish to do here is to impress on the reader the great complexity of the Muria pantheon, and the intimate human way in which its various members are interrelated.

The gods then come into being by migration from outside and by the division of the tribe into various clans. Many of the gods named in the song are clan-gods, and as the clans split up new gods come into being. But this is not the only way that gods are born. We already have a hint of a fundamental Muria belief in the statement that Tallur Muttai sent her servant to trouble men with disease in order to get food-sacrifice to keep her quiet. The gods are troublesome and expensive, and the more troublesome they are the more they are honoured. This is, of course, the normal Gond method of attracting attention. A Gond wife, who is devoted to her husband, sulks and makes a nuisance of herself, not because she is in a temper, but simply because she judges that to be the best way of getting herself noticed.

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Some of the gods, however, have come into being as a result of actual incidents, no doubt greatly magnified by the course of time. I have only room for a few examples of this tendency. In a village near Bishrampuri there is the shrine of Pendrawandin Pen, a goddess about whom there has been much controversy. Long ago, so runs the local legend, a Muria of the Naitami clan had a daughter called Hidde for whose hand a Poyami boy called Kuria was serving as Lamhada. Hidde's father made a dam across a stream, but the water kept breaking through. Then one day a dream came to him, 'Worship me and I will stop the water'. The Muria thought in his heart 'Whom shall I sacrifice?' He decided to offer the Lamhada boy, Kuria. He took him to the stream, pushed him in and piled earth above his body. At once the dam became firm and strong. But now Hidde began to search for her lover, and when she came to the dam she saw one finger sticking out of the earth. When she saw this she jumped into the stream and was drowned also.[2] After a few days, her ghost began to trouble her father, and when he asked who it was, she replied, 'I am Pendrawandin, your daughter; worship me and I will trouble you no more'. Then began the cult of Pendrawandin and her consort Kuria Pen. Unfortunately, at the time of her death Hidde was in

[1] The word 'brother' is used in both its actual and classificatory senses: the Muria are very confused over these relationships.

[2] With this story compare the legend of Ganga and Beni, who are associated with the source of the Waingunga river at Mundara.—R. V. Russell, *Seoni District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1907), p. 178.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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To understand this, we must consider in some detail the relation of Muria parents to their children.

## IV. Avoiding the Primal Scene

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At about the time when children become capable of something more than games and food, they also become something of an embarrassment about the house. There is nowhere for them to sleep at night. They are always clamouring to go and play with the other children. They are apt to surprise the intimacies of marital life. The parents decide that it is time they went to the ghotul. At the age of six or seven, then, a child begins its dormitory life. In most ghotul there is a group of very small children, sent by their parents 'to get them out of the way'. They are not given ghotul names or any ghotul privileges, but the house serves as a sort of crèche, and after all most of the little children have older brothers or sisters there who can look after them.

One of the reasons often given by Muria to explain the existence of the ghotul is that 'it is sinful for parents to sleep in the presence of their children'. 'As soon as a child understands what it [that is, sexual intercourse] is, we send it to the ghotul.' Apparently the Muria parent does not consider the child capable of understanding the meaning of the 'primal scene' till it is about six or seven. But it is interesting and significant that the Muria should consider the point at all. It is indeed of such importance that I will quote all the statements that have been made to me about it. 'The very reason for the ghotul', said the headman of Jhakri, 'is that it is sinful to sleep before a daughter or a son. They must never see the parents sleeping on one mat, either by day or night. Suppose a little girl comes home late at night for some reason and finds her parents holding each other on the mat, they are very angry and abuse her saying, "Haven't you your ghotul to live in? Why do you want to come here?"'

In Malakot, the village Gaita told me that 'young children are only kept at home while they are too young to understand pleasure and pain. Very little children may sleep with their mothers, but then they must go somewhere else. They are always getting frightened, so we send them as soon as we can to the ghotul.'

Here is another opinion from one of the elders of Kongera. 'Suppose the child is two or three years old and suddenly wakes up to find its father copulating with the mother. The father goes on, he takes no notice, but the mother pats the child's chest saying, "I'll give you something to eat in a moment, but keep quiet now, my darling". The father also speaks sweet words to the child in order to deceive it about what is happening. But suppose it is a big child, of five or six years, then it is difficult. The father ceases his work and goes away. Next day they send it to the ghotul.'

And this from Binjhli: 'The ghotul was made simply to stop children watching their parents copulating. As soon as boys or girls understand what that is, we send them to the ghotul. It is a great shame to watch one's own parents at it. "What are they doing?" the little children say, wondering. "Why is my father throwing my mother about like that?" So we take them to the ghotul, and they ask no more questions. But what do the Hindu children do and the sahibs, where all live in one house and they have no ghotul?'

And finally from Alor: 'How difficult it is for parents to tell their bigger children, whom they have not yet sent to the ghotul, to go and sleep in another room. Some children are very good and understand, but others are stupid and insist on crowding into the parents' room. We daren't, even while

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they are asleep, pick them up and put them on the verandah. We feel very pleased when they begin to say, "This or that little girl has gone to the ghotul. I used to play with her, and now I feel lonely. Do let me go too". We send them to the ghotul very willingly.'

This desire to prevent the child from witnessing the 'primal scene' is interesting and important, though modern psycho-analysts are inclined to believe that Freud over-emphasized its dangers, and certainly any harm likely to be done to the child would have been done long before it reached the ghotul age. But it is at least significant that the parents are aware of the danger, that they think it not only embarrassing for themselves but harmful to the children, and that so many should trace the foundation of the ghotul to a cause which Freud would surely have applauded.[1]

But not only does the ghotul save the child from the psychological dangers of witnessing the 'primal scene'; it alters the entire parent-child complex by putting in the place of the father a new disciplinarian and in the place of the mother a new object of sensual attraction. 'When a boy or girl enters the ghotul', said a leading chelik at Masora, 'he usually forgets his relations altogether. They say they have no relations. The head of the ghotul is the father, and the Belosa is the mother.' However strict the father may be at home, however insistent on the fulfilment of domestic and economic duties, his authority is nothing before that of the dreaded Sirdar, who can fine you, truss your legs up to the roof, make you a mockery to your fellows. The father fades into the background if he comes home drunk and beats up the family, the children will not be there, his orders and curses are feeble before those of the Sirdar. The father may still control a boy's work and duty, but his emotional life is dominated by the Sirdar. The result of this has been well put by J. P. Mills. Speaking of the policy of the American Baptist Mission in Assam which has, of course, been to discourage the dormitories which formerly flourished there as in Bastar, he writes,

> In forbidding their converts to use the *morung* and in undermining it as an institution the Mission are taking a very dangerous step, from which they would surely have shrunk if they had considered the psychological aspect of the matter. A boy goes to the *morung* when he is very small—as soon, that is to say, as he 'feels shame' at sleeping in the same room as his parents. It is in the *morung* that he fags for other boys and is taught his duties in life and generally hammered into shape. This means that the *morung* tends to take the place of his father as a disciplinarian. This is most important, for it is from a son's feeling towards his father as disciplinarian that one of the great stresses of the family complex arises. Looking back over the thousands of Naga disputes that have been brought before me in the course of my service, it certainly seems to me that violent quarrels between fathers and sons are more frequent in tribes which have no *morungs*.[2]

Mills illustrates this by showing that in the Sema tribe where, as we have seen, there are no *morung*, such quarrels are disastrously common; Angami boys, who also do not grow up in dormitories, resent any form of discipline,

[1] The same desire is said to be at the bottom of the custom recorded of the Savara of Orissa who, it is claimed, never have sexual congress after nightfall, but go out together during the day to special places in the jungle. The tribe has no dormitory, and the whole family has to sleep together in a single hut. See S. N. Roy, 'The Savaras of Orissa', *Man in India*, Vol. VII, p. 331. But I believe the taboo on intercourse at night to be an invention. I discuss it in my *Myths of Middle India*.

[2] Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, pp. 42f.

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yet among the Ao, where the *morung* plays an important part, quarrels between father and son are rare.

Muria parents are tolerant and understanding. 'Whenever we hear the music of a drum', said a boy at Kabonga, 'we feel restless; we leave everything we are doing and go at once to dance and sing.' Here I was told a story, that is often repeated, of a boy who was sowing seed in his father's field. He had a whole measure of rice to sow, but when he heard drums beating in a neighbouring village he forgot all about it and went off to join the dance, leaving the pile of rice on the ground. Three days later he returned expecting to be beaten, but his father had understood the boy's feelings and had himself gone to the field and sown the rice instead. I have been told in various villages that for recognized festivals and marriages, parents are very sympathetic to their children.

[689] And indeed if the parents interfere with the life and discipline of the ghotul, if they stop their children going to it without sufficient excuse, they are fined—and so firmly established is the institution that they pay up.

There is very generally a convention that the parents know nothing of what happens in the ghotul. They are not even supposed to know their children's titles though, of course, they actually know everything that goes on. But the conventions must be observed. The children do not sing ghotul songs at home. A girl should not let her parents see her as she goes out to the ghotul or when she comes back. That is one reason why she returns home very early in the morning. She ought to be at work husking rice or cleaning the house when her parents get up. Should a girl meet her father as she is going to the ghotul, she should turn her head aside and walk away as quickly as possible. They should not greet or say anything to each other. But in some villages, in Kabonga for example, and at Jhakri, the older people have told me that when a girl gets engaged, her mother advises her to be very careful about allowing boys to take liberties with her. It is said, however, that the parents never warn a girl or boy against any particular person. At Jhakri, Raunu said that the mother says to the daughter at this time, 'Don't play and laugh too much with the boys; be happy, but don't let your hands and feet get into trouble. I never got into trouble nor did your grandmother; we were always known to be good girls for we never became pregnant. Never run away with a boy but marry the one we choose for you and don't quarrel with your girl friends.' So also a father advises his son to be very careful in his relations with girls who are already engaged to other boys. The reasons for this attitude are purely financial: 'Don't make a girl pregnant. We are poor people; I shall not be able to pay the fine; if you get into mischief you will have to go and work as someone's servant and pay the fine that way. Be happy but don't always run after the same girl.'

It will be seen that this kind of advice is very practical, and for that reason the boys and girls do not resent it. The parents are not concerned with the 'morals' of their children and, indeed, even when a boy makes a girl pregnant the parents generally stand by him and help him. When I asked a chelik at Markabera whether his parents ever got angry with him for sexual indulgence in the ghotul, he replied, 'Why should they, didn't they do the same when they were young?'

It is not easy to obtain information about the mother-son relationship. I have not heard of any 'possessive' mothers and the general circumstances of Muria life are such as to eliminate the dangers of the mother-fixation. Naturally, mothers tend to spoil their sons and fathers their daughters. 'A boy may be frightened of his father but he is never afraid of his mother. If

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he does not work properly his father chases him with a stick and he hides until he knows the danger is past and then his mother receives him lovingly and gives him special food.'

It is said that a mother often accuses the father of jealousy, saying, 'You cannot bear seeing that boy's happiness when he goes to the ghotul dance; can't you remember that you were a young boy yourself once and you too went to the ghotul?'

Widows' sons and only sons are often spoilt and indulged—'*Rānd he beta sānd*, a widow's son is a bull': he does what he likes and no one can control him. So too it is said of an only son that 'he brings home all the quarrels of the world: if he is given a pot to urinate in, he does it on the floor'.

On the whole the relation of children and parents is a happy one. This may be at least one reason why there is so little conflict and jealousy, so little strain, among the Muria.

In many respects, Muria practice corresponds to what Seligman once described as the psycho-analytic ideal of education. Melanie Klein, speaking of children rather younger than many of those in the ghotul, describes the upbringing of the future generation. 'We shall be more sparing of compulsory ethical requirements in regard to the tiny developing creature than people were with us. We shall allow him to remain for a longer period uninhibited and natural, less interfered with than has hitherto been the case, to become conscious of his different instinctive impulses and of his pleasure therein, without immediately whipping up his cultural tendencies against this ingenuousness. We shall aim at a slower development that allows room for his instincts to become partially conscious, and together with this for their possible sublimation. At the same time, we shall not refuse expression to his awakening sexual curiosity and shall satisfy it step by step, even—in my opinion—withholding nothing. We shall know how to give him sufficient affection, and yet avoid a harmful superfluity: above all, we shall reject physical punishment and threats, and secure obedience necessary for upbringing by means of withdrawing affection.'[1]

Of this passage Seligman says that 'my experience suggests that further investigation will show a very small number of psychotics among the less advanced of the primitive races, and here it is interesting to note that in the upbringing of their children these races do, to a considerable extent, conform to the psycho-analytic ideal' set out above. He adds that 'there is, however, one desideratum laid down by the author, which I believe is only occasionally fulfilled, "that the child from birth shall not share the parental bedroom"'.[2]

[1] Melanie Klein, 'The Development of a Child', *The International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, Vol. IV (1923), p. 445.

[2] C. G. Seligman, 'Anthropological Perspective and Psychological Theory', *JRAI*, Vol. LXII, p. 221. A terrible picture of the effect on a boy's mind and character caused by witnessing scenes in his parents' bedroom is given by Graham Greene in his novel *Brighton Rock*.

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found alone in the ghotul with him. A Muria girl never covers her head,[1] but at least she must not undo her hair in his presence. When the elder brother is away from the ghotul his 'wife' is allowed to sleep with her '*dewar*', the younger brother.

A chelik does not seem to have to avoid entirely his brother's daughters; in the ghotul he may abuse them or flirt with them, but he ought not to sleep with one of them. But they can massage him, as indeed his own sisters can. They call him *mâma* in the ghotul. This leads us to the interesting provision that close relations should not address each other by their ghotul titles, but by terms of relationship, thus continually reminding themselves and one another how they are related and that they must behave.

What is the reason for these rules of avoidance? The ban on the younger brother's wife is probably to safeguard the position of the younger brother, always in jeopardy as a hundred folk-tales show. In the ghotul certainly it serves as a valuable protection to a younger boy, whose brother might well be the all-powerful Sirdar or Diwan. Similarly, the rule of avoidance between a boy and his motiari's elder sister, who might be the almost equally powerful Belosa or head of the girls, prevents her from taking advantage of her position to seduce a boy away from his 'lawful wife'.

There does not appear to be any taboo on brothers and sisters witnessing each other's erotic adventures in the ghotul, provided they do not discuss them with each other and, of course, strictly avoid any relations between themselves. It is not, however, considered improper for a brother to have full knowledge of and to hear all about his sister's love affairs. Once in Binjhli a boy told me in Gondi how he had dreamt that he was having intercourse with a certain girl. The girl's own brother interpreted for me without embarrassment.

A sister sleeps every night with a boy in the presence of her brother. A brother flirts and makes love and sleeps with girls before his sister. They seem to be quite unembarrassed and both behave naturally.

FIG. 59. Wall-decoration from the Remawand ghotul
*Height 6'*

[1] What Hoffmann said so charmingly of the Munda is true also of the Muria girl: 'Nothing but a load or a flower is ever seen on the head of a Munda woman.'

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In many ghotul a sister may comb and massage a brother, but in Kabonga there was a rule that she must not salute him with Johar nor comb his hair.

Many coarse jokes are made about the relation of brothers and sisters when everyone is drunk at a marriage. There are many obscene songs about it, for it is regarded as a licensed subject for humour. As in other societies, however, it is probable that such humour only exists against a background of very strict propriety. The suggestion that a brother is sleeping with his sister is amusing simply because he never does.

Generally it is said that brothers and sisters live together very happily. When they do quarrel a boy may say to his sister: 'You *potsa* (big-bellied one), you *chipri* (you've got dirty eyes), *saladri* (murderess).' It is said that a girl on her marriage remembers these delightful animosities and weeps bitterly saying, 'No one will be able to quarrel with me so sweetly in future'. The brother may threaten to turn his sister out of the house, but she has the ready retort available that 'in any case I am not going to stay in your house, I can easily make a living somewhere else'.

## III

How far is the rule of fidelity to a single partner kept? This is a matter on which there can be no possible statistical evidence; one can only give a general impression and quote a few examples. The temptation to break the rules must be very great. Ghotul routine aims at stimulating the sexual passion. The boys and girls live in the closest contact, and enjoy sexual intimacy in one another's presence. Certain relatives, such as the younger brother, have traditional privileges. The chelik are often absent in the fields, and their motiari sleep accessible and alone. In every 'memoir' that I have collected, the narrator has described how he or she evaded the ghotul rules.

From these memoirs I will give a few quotations. My first is from the experiences of Budhu, a Poyami of Kanera in the Sonawal Pargana of Kondagaon, in a *jodidār* ghotul forty years ago.

> In those days there were about twelve boys and ten girls in the ghotul, and a boy used to sleep with his partner until his marriage unless he changed his name. I was married to the Malko and loved her very much. I was then Sepahi. But after two years, I was made Kotwar, and I had to leave Malko and sleep with the Kotwarin, for that was the rule. Yet my thoughts were always for Malko, and at night when everyone was asleep I would leave the mat where I was sleeping with Kotwarin and creep over to Malko to make love to her.
>
> My parents knew nothing of this, yet to my delight they told me one day that they were going to arrange my marriage with Malko, which was just what we wanted.
>
> A few days after this good news, I went to Sonawal for work and stayed there for a week. During this time I slept in the Sonawal ghotul with the Jamadarin. On the last night this girl took the comb from my hair as a keepsake. From Sonawal I went to Kokori and danced in the ghotul there. One of the motiari fell in love with me and constantly offered me tobacco. After a few days I started home, but three of the girls met me in the jungle and begged me to stay with them, but I had to go home.
>
> Soon afterwards I was married to Malko and we were very happy. We have always done everything together and have never quarrelled.

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## THE PROBLEM OF GHOTUL INFERTILITY

Sometimes, indeed, the chelik actually try to make a girl pregnant. In Kanhargaon, two very popular motiari were betrothed to boys at Nayanar. The Kanhargaon chelik did all they could to make them pregnant so that they could force them into marriage and keep them in their own village. But they were unsuccessful, and in the end one of the girls was seduced by her own betrothed at a marriage, became pregnant and was hastily married to him. It is not uncommon, though I have no statistics on the point, for engaged couples whose parents unduly delay their marriage to force the issue either by eloping together or by trying to achieve a pregnancy.

But on the whole, the admirable ghotul rule that engaged couples should have nothing to do with one another before marriage is carefully observed. Out of 113 Lamhada boys serving for their wives and in close proximity for several years to the girls they were going to marry, only 5 made them pregnant.

Pre-nuptial pregnancy does not seem to injure the couple's relationships in marriage, provided a youth marries the girl himself. Of the 26 chelik who married the motiari they made pregnant, not one made a failure of his domestic life. At the time of my inquiries every one of them was living with his original partner and very happy with her. But those who had infertile sexual connexion with their wives before marriage showed a comparatively high divorce rate. Of the 316 who admitted to this, 14 had unsuccessful marriages. Of these 77 were the regular ghotul-wives of my informants and 68 of them were still living together when I inquired.

In only three cases during the last twenty years has a pregnancy been taken so seriously as to lead to tragedy. Two of these were the suicides which I have already described in Chapter XV. But here it was not so much the pregnancy itself as the fact that the pregnancy was the result of a connexion between chelik and motiari of the same clan that mattered. The third tragedy appears to have been due largely to a chelik's fear of the disgrace and expense, especially as it was his second experience of the kind.

At the beginning of April 1942, Birjhu, a chelik of the Aturbera ghotul, discovered with dismay that his motiari, Mori, was pregnant. Only a year before he had made another girl pregnant in the ghotul, had refused to marry her and had forced his parents to pay compensation. They did so, but they made many threats as to what they would do if it occurred again. Mori, who seems to have been in love with the boy, said that he must marry her, but Birjhu refused and said that if she told anybody that it was through him that she had conceived, he would kill her. After a little while, however, the poor girl told her brother's wife about it. When Birjhu heard she had done so, he planned to carry out his threat. On the night of the 14th of April, he told Mori he would do what she wanted and they had better elope together and get married in another village. Late at night they crept stealthily out of the ghotul and made their way through the forest. But suddenly, before they had gone very far, Birjhu caught hold of the girl and strangled her. Then he dragged her body below a tree and tied a rope round the neck to make it look as though the girl had committed suicide.

The following day a report was made at the Narayanpur police station that Mori had committed suicide. When Birjhu heard that the matter had gone to the police, he was frightened but possibly even more he was overwhelmed with sorrow and misery at what he had done. He disappeared, and two days later hanged himself from a tree in the jungle.

But this is the only incident of the kind that has yet been recorded.

Such is the general picture, familiar to students of pre-marital freedom everywhere. How are we to explain the fact that through all the years of

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## THE GHOTUL AND MARRIAGE

O that beautiful ghotul!
Every day you went to clean it.
The road was like a jackal's tail.
You used to go along that road.
In your left hand was a winnowing-fan,
In your right hand a broom,
At sunset you would go there.
You will never see that Raj again.
Now you are going to your husband's house.
Now your pleasure will be work in the house.
You have got no sense at all.
Your husband will curse you,
Your mother-in-law will curse you.
Holding your forehead you will weep.
You will remember the days of youth.
Then you will know what hardship is.
You have got no sense at all.

The first days of marriage certainly appear to emphasize this taunt. The new life together is not immediately satisfactory, especially for the girl. She has to stay in a house filled with her husband's relatives, and work for them. She has not yet a house, perhaps not even a room, of her own. It is not easy for her to adjust herself to the complete and drastic change in her life. 'A young wife,' they said at Masora, 'is like a bulbul whose tail goes up and down all the time. So does she shake her buttocks. She cooks if she feels like it, gets water if she feels inclined. It is hard for her to forget she is no more a motiari; her feet itch to dance.' But she must never enter the ghotul again, the ghotul which for the last six or eight years has been the centre of her social and emotional life. She must avoid her old ghotul partners; she must forget her ghotul name; she must give away most of her ornaments; she has lost her freedom. Lingo Pen will no longer protect her from pregnancy, which indeed quickly follows. There are no more rapturous evenings round the ghotul fire, no more expeditions through the green forest to other villages, no more dancing to the light of torches at the great festivals. She is now a wife and must prepare to be a mother.

For the husband the change is less drastic. He may continue to spend his evenings in the ghotul, returning home late at night to sleep. This is perhaps the hardest trial that the young wife has to bear; she must abandon old romance, he may continue it. He even holds his ghotul title for six months or a year longer. He may go on expeditions, organize marriages, dance at festivals. But his sex life is undoubtedly curtailed. 'Now he is responsible,' I was told at Malakot. 'He is a man with wife and home. Fun and teasing is ended, touching others is ended; he has a wife. For his old habits the penalty is swelling and death. He may now only do it at marriages and at the sport of the gods at festivals.' Even his visits to the ghotul must soon end. Sooner or later he must lay down his office; sooner or later comes the day when the boys suggest that his presence is no longer so welcome as it was. He must then stop his visits or he will be fined and his poultry stolen.

But by this time married life has become established and serene. Happiness has begun to illuminate the hard tasks of home and field. That is why the Muria regard marriage of such supreme importance; everyone must pass through its gate to the fulfilment of tribal and social life. The ghotul with its many joys might easily have become an end in itself. But the Muria

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regard it as a mere preparation; the ghotul is the school of marriage, a training-ground of the domestic virtues. 'When a girl learns to keep the ghotul clean, she will keep her husband's house clean; the boy who is taught to bring wood and work hard will do the same in his own house.'

Still more important, the ghotul exercises its members in the sexual arts and virtues. In other 'higher' societies, how many lives have been ruined on the marriage night![1] But when a newly-married Muria husband and wife approach each other, they are already sexually educated, graduates in the technique of love, instinctively able to avoid the dangers into which untried partners so easily fall. The agony of defloration is divorced from marriage; the hymen casts no shadow across its consummation. The husband is not likely to be repelled by frigidity or shocked by dispareunia—an experience which might later make him impotent. Not a little of the serenity and stability of Muria marriage is due to the fact that when husband and wife cross its threshold they are both prepared.

## II. The Appeal of the Childhood Friend

But though the ghotul is a school of marriage, it is not a place for experimental marriages. According to Muria tradition a chelik should never marry his ghotul partner, and once a boy and girl are betrothed they are separated in the ghotul by the strictest of taboos.

For a long time I was under the impression that marriages had to be arranged between families living in different villages. But when I examined the matter statistically I was surprised to find that out of the 2000 marriages scrutinized, there were

| | |
|---|---|
| Marriages between members of the same ghotul .. .. | 765 |
| Marriages between members of different ghotul .. .. | 1235 |

Of the 765, between members of the same ghotul, there were

| | |
|---|---|
| Lamhada (marriage by service)[2] .. .. .. .. | 113 |
| Irregular marriages (chelik marrying their ghotul-wives) .. | 77 |
| Betrothed in the ordinary way .. .. .. .. | 575 |

These figures are sufficient to show that there is no official objection to boys and girls who are to marry each other later growing up in the same ghotul. This is significant when we remember that both boy and girl will be regularly cohabiting with others during the betrothal period. But that this does not interfere with their ultimate happiness is shown by the figures for divorce. These are very low, only 59, or under 3 per cent, for the whole tribe, but they rise startlingly in two special cases.

[1] 'The course of a marriage is determined by the wedding night.' With these words Dr R. S. Chesser opens her discussion of the Honeymoon in A. Forbath, *Love, Marriage, Jealousy* (London, 1938), p. 169. The Muria would think that very odd.

[2] Many of the Lamhada boys probably came from different villages, but after beginning their period of service would have had to join the same ghotul as their future wives.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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40 of the divorces were due to the women. To these we might perhaps add another 9 cases where divorce followed a polygynous marriage.

It is noticeable that in no case has childlessness been put forward as a reason for divorce, though I have found this outside the circle of informants examined for statistical purposes. It is also notable that out of 2,000 men only 11 were suffering from some kind of impotence. It is possible to assert this since it is almost axiomatic that divorce should follow impotence. 'As soon as the penis weakens, the vagina runs to the jungle.'

In this particular set of divorces no case of witchcraft is mentioned. But this too I have found elsewhere, and the legends tell how Lingo himself had to drive away five of his seven wives because they were suspected of being witches.

The 25 cases of wives who 'ran away' are probably to be classed as love-affairs. There is no case of a man driving out his wife for adultery. 'A Muria never gets angry with his wife unless with his own eyes he sees her in the arms of another man.' Nor does the Muria husband listen to scandal. 'All the village knows where the cow is at pasture—except the cowherd.'

The paucity of material makes a study of divorce difficult. Generally the Muria husband and wife remain together through all vicissitudes. I heard of a beautiful example of fidelity at Bargaon. A former Chalki described how after he had been married a year, his wife's 'privates came out' and he was unable to have intercourse with her. His friends advised him to marry someone else. 'But I considered how she had given me great happiness for that year.' How could I leave her then? What would she have done? Who would give her happiness? So I stayed with her, and married no one else, but sometimes visited the ghotul.'

If there is any possible excuse for forgiveness, the Muria forgive a sexual lapse—not because they are complacent but because their philosophy forces them to tolerance. If there is any kind of doubt in an accusation, they give their partner the benefit of it. Through poverty and sorrow, despite the malice of witch and warlock or the mysterious hostility of the unseen gods, through doubt and temptation, heedless of the swift death of beauty and the passing of desire, they stand by one another and in their old age are not without reward. Muria domestic life might well be a model and example to the whole world.

## VIII. JEALOUSY

Jealousy, which was defined by Descartes as 'a kind of fear related to a desire to preserve a possession', is generally used in a much wider sense and covers, as Westermarck says, such different emotions as rage at a rival, revenge for stolen property and anguish at the knowledge or suspicion of violated chastity and outraged conjugal affection.[1] Hartland in his study of jealousy among 'savages' considered that the sense of ownership was the seed-plot of jealousy,[2] but Westermarck rightly points out that this is not enough: 'If jealousy has anything to do with the sense of ownership the reason is that it is primarily connected with the desire of possession, which is something different. Moreover sexual jealousy springs from sexual love.' One of the best recent descriptions is by Stekel. Jealousy, he says, is 'the expression of the desire to possess an object wholly. It is primordial, is born with man and dies with him. It is still a tragic characteristic of all people, to be unable

[1] Westermarck, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 302.
[2] E. S. Hartland, *Primitive Paternity* (London, 1910), Vol. II, p. 102.

## THE GHOTUL AND MARRIAGE

626 Quarrels are equally dangerous. They not only destroy one of the chief of the Muria's treasures—his sense of tribal solidarity—but like adultery they bring the vengeance of heaven upon the village that indulges in them. They must, therefore, be avoided and if they do occur peace must be made at once. In Binjhli Tetku and his brother Maria had a row over a field and beat each other. Their *saga*-relatives hurried to the village, they got salphi and mahua liquor, and held a panch. The Gaita dipped a gold ear-ring in water and sprinkled it over the two offenders; he dipped the ear-ring also in the liquor. Each brother gave the other a drink and peace was established. When Dandu and Aitu quarrelled in Masora, everyone was afraid that some epidemic would attack the village. They both did indeed fall ill, their bodies swelling mysteriously. They called the Gaita and gave him a pig, five measures of rice and a rupee's worth of liquor to sacrifice. He did so, praying, 'O Mahapurub, you are the earth, you are our mother. We have made a mistake. Even an elephant with four feet sometimes slips; what can we men with only two feet do? We give you this offering, let there be no more trouble.' And he warned the quarrellers that next time it would cost them ten rupees to make peace.

152 Everything in Muria society is thus calculated to render jealousy unnecessary, dangerous and undignified. Its absence is further proved, not only by a mass of statements and absence of the criminal cases that would certainly arise from it, but by concrete instances of social practice. For example, the Muria does not insist on his wife coming to him as a virgin, nor does she expect that her husband should find in her the first girl he has ever loved. When we consider the vast number of peoples who have required an exactly opposite state of things, we see how free the Muria must be from jealousy affecting the period before marriage.

593 After marriage, says the best Muria opinion, husband and wife should never
152 refer to their lives in the ghotul, still less should they rebuke each other with their old love-affairs. The very fact that exceptions to this are so carefully noted shows how rare they are. A Saidar of Botha is said to have forced his wife to swear that she never slept with any boy in her ghotul. The Diwan of Nayanar is said to have constantly nagged his young wife about a former lover till she stopped him by saying, 'Very well, if it is true—as you say—that I love him so much, I will go and live with him'. At Alor the Gaita said, 'A boy may try to get his wife to confess what she did in her ghotul, but he has no right to, and she can always say "Whatever I did, you did the same or more" '. It was considered a very severe rebuke indeed when the Kotwar of Almer shouted at his lazy wife, 'Why don't you get up earlier to work? Didn't your parents teach you how to work, or did they only train you to sleep with the chelik night and day?'

593 A husband is generally very good to a wife who as a motiari got a child by
152 another man. He takes the child as his own and the convention is that no reference should ever be made to the matter. This would not be so astonishing
837 if it only happened when a girl conceived in the ghotul, for any sensible man would regard it as the logical conclusion of what he had already accepted, that his wife was sleeping with other youths throughout the period of their engagement. But it is remarkable, I think, when a boy accepts a girl who has run away with another man whom she obviously loves and is going to have a child who will constantly remind her of this former lover. An incident at Samalpur is typical of scores of others which I have recorded. In this village the Sirdar of the ghotul made a girl pregnant and ran away with her. They were brought back and he was fined five rupees and the girl was married to her betrothed.

## THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

593 A month later, the girl left her husband's house and again eloped with the Sirdar. They were again pursued, caught and brought back. The Sirdar was fined five rupees, and the girl's father had to pay five rupees to her husband who then accepted his wife back again without demur. In a similar case at Garhbangal, the villagers said that 'the boy was so angry that he did not sleep with her for two nights'. 'But', they added, 'he had her four times on the third night.' I cannot believe that this shows a very high degree of domestic jealousy, especially as it was suggested that the real cause of the husband's temper was the fact that he had to pay two rupees compensation to the panch, the usual fine for allowing yourself to be cuckolded. I know of one case, but only one, where a girl could not bear the thought that her husband had made another girl pregnant, even though the girl was safely married to someone else. A former Nakedar of Binjhli described how she quarrelled with him for a whole year about the baby he had by the Piosa. 'Why didn't you marry her, if you were so fond of her as to give her a baby?' Why don't you bring the child to the house? Then you can turn me out', and so on. At last he gave her a good beating and 'since then', he said, 'we have been very happy together'.

This general absence of the often discussed *jalousie du passé* is the more remarkable in that a really serious cause of domestic friction exists in a husband's continued visits to the ghotul after marriage. A wife never has this privilege, but a husband may continue to go every night if he wants to and certainly during his wife's periods for at least six months and sometimes for several years. Young wives feel this to be unfair, and they naturally hate the thought of their husbands returning to their old lovers. One would have expected scores of marriages to have been wrecked in the first few months for this cause alone, but it is not so. It is said that the wife always forces her husband to have intercourse with her before he goes to the ghotul, thus immobilizing him to some extent.

587 We must note finally that the Muria does not insist on his wife remaining faithful to his memory by continuing a widow. Far from it, he insists that she should marry again as soon as possible. A dying man actually knows whose arms will embrace his wife within a month or two of his death, for his younger brother has a natural claim on her. In this also we see a remarkable absence of marital jealousy.

Looking through the great number of examples assembled by Westermarck and Briffault, the most remarkable thing about the Muria's attitude to jealousy is their recognition of it is as a problem and a danger, and their deliberate attempt to educate it out of their lives. I think it more than probable that if their neighbours, the Bison-horn Maria, had the ghotul system fully developed, they would commit fewer murders.

### IX. Quarrels and their Causes

152 For all this absence of jealousy, it would be absurd to suppose that Muria life is an idyll undisturbed by quarrel or dispute. Yet on the whole Muria families live together very happily; quarrels are not common, and their cause is usually some breach of the law of equality which is so firmly instilled into the mind of every chelik and motiari during the ghotul period. Jealousy about food is said to be the most primitive expression of that passion. In the ghotul, and at all tribal feasts, the food is divided with meticulous exactitude: every piece of meat is counted; leaf-cups are made to a standard size; everyone gets exactly the same amount of liquor or parched rice. So too work must

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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be distributed equally; no one boy must do more than another; no one may shirk, but no one may be unduly burdened.[1]

In the home, after marriage, quarrels usually arise about the distribution of work. This, rather than sexual jealousy, is the real cause of dispute in polygamous households. Where brothers live together, their wives quarrel about the serving of the food. To say *tokirsa* of a girl implies that 'she stares at other people eating' in a suggestive way; 'she peeps in from the door when other folk sit down for a meal, hoping to get some' but she will do no work herself. The real sting of the expression *jutaha*, 'eater of another's leavings', is that it suggests that the *jutaha* never works for himself, but goes cadging round ready to eat anything, even the scraps off dirty plates.

Men beat their wives for not cooking properly, but rarely for any other cause. Here again, the reason for a man's anger is not that he feels he has missed a good meal, but that he thinks his wife is not doing her fair share of work of the home. He himself has been out all day working in the fields; his wife has been enjoying herself at home, chatting with her gossips, wasting her time; otherwise she would certainly have cooked properly.

The actual records of these quarrels are instructive. At Jhakri I overheard a man quarrelling with his wife. 'Why didn't you make the rice soft, you *jutaha*?' he shouted. 'You haven't even yet learnt to cook. When you were a girl did you do nothing but dance at marriages?' To which his wife replied, 'Of course, all through my youth I sat still in the house, and my food was brought to me in bed. Ever since I married you, you have done all the work and I have just sat filling my belly. Come along, *mailotia*, turn me out of your house, you can get another cook, and I'll live somewhere else.'

At Palli, Shamrao Hivale was privileged to listen to a wife abusing her drunken husband for chronic idleness. It was an epic row, which went on and on, and of which every detail was so often repeated that it was easy to record.

> You can only live, screamed the woman, where there is a smell of liquor. That is your real home—the out-still—there is your bed and hearth; you have no home here. What will you do if I die? Who will feed you, who will look after the children? If you won't work, I will leave you and I will take away my children. You wander all day like a goat and all night like a thief. There is no salt in the house, there are no chillies; suppose the landlord comes and asks for some, or suppose a constable comes and wants food, what shall we do? If visitors come, what food can we give them? How are you going to pay the taxes? You shameless creature, a woman has sense but you have none. When there is work to be done, there is no life in you, but when you see liquor you are full of vigour. Then you are like a pig when it catches sight of excrement.
>
> You child of a Ghasnin's vagina, go and wash your dirty face and eyes; go and see how other people work. If I had known what you were like, I would never have come to your house, you corpse. When there is work to be done in the house, then your back begins to ache, your penis is sore. Look, your son is ill, but you won't go to the Siraha—

[1] The Santal also insist on the exact division of food at festivals—P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine* (Calcutta, 1925), p. 78—and I have noticed it also among the Orissa tribes. So keen are the Savara on the precise allocation of labour that when I have required porters to shift camp, every man in the village has turned up—many more than necessary—to ensure that no one does more, or less, work than anyone else.

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for you would have to give him liquor. The children are old enough for marriage but you can't spare the liquor to betroth them. Yet there's always plenty of liquor for your own genitals. If you at least had a sister, I would go to her house and forcibly bring her daughter for our boy—but what other family would give a girl to marry a son of yours unless they had the proper gifts of liquor? You eater of excrement, eater of dog's-flesh, I have spent my life telling you how to live, and now in a year or two you will go to your grave, yet you have never taken note of what I say. We have no place in the house to dry tendu or mahua; we have no garden and the manure is lying useless in the house. Everyone else has beans and vegetable and even sago palms, but we never have anything. You come quarrelling for better food, the children cry for cucumbers; there is no maize, and the children have to go and watch other people eating—while your hands and feet are being eaten by white ants. May a tiger eat you, then I can marry another man. If you die there will be less evil in the world.

Yet, as a boy at Phauda said, 'We may quarrel for *pej* and *pāni* in the day, but we become one at night', and at Kehalakot the Chalan said, 'Our life is never full unless we quarrel'.

This enjoyment of a quarrel, at least between lovers, is shown in a proverbial rhyme.

*Tor gāri to mor kān he bāri,*
*Tor mutha to mor chutka,*
*Mārbe lāt to mor dār bhāt,*
*Jitna mārbe panihi tatnāhi banihi.*

Your abuse is the ring in my ear,
Your blows are my toe-rings,
If you kick me, it is my pulse and rice,
The more you beat me with your shoes, the more we are united.

Just as between husband and wife, so between parents and children quarrels arise about the distribution of work. On the whole relations in the home are friendly and happy; it is notable too that any attempt of parents to punish their children is spoken of as a 'quarrel'—something that arises between equals.

Parents indeed rarely complain about their children's sexual activities; the thing that worries them is that the ghotul interferes with the work of the house. The average Muria parent, it seems to me, does make real sacrifices for his children. He must experience considerable financial loss as a result of letting them go on so many expeditions, attend so many marriages and festivals and divert so many of their deeper interests from their home. But no one can say that he likes it. He usually complains that the boys and girls are guilty of four main faults—they don't obey their parents, for they have more consideration for the ghotul leaders than for them; they steal family property, little bits of wood and tobacco, and take it to the ghotul; they get uppish, answer their parents back and are afraid of no one; they don't get up early enough in the morning and they don't do enough work. Among the forms of abuse and examples of domestic quarrels that I have been able to collect, nearly all are concerned with this one point of not doing enough work. A mother says to her daughter, 'You *nakti mailotia*, all day long you are laughing with your boy friends; so and so's mother was telling me that you were ruining him; he never does any work now. If you don't work properly at home, how will you work in your husband's house? He will turn you out and our honour



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will be ruined'. Or a father says to his son, 'I spit on your ghotul friends; all you can do is to dance and sing; you have no idea of how to work; when I tell you to do some work you always have a pain in the stomach. When you see a plough you at once get fever, but when you hear a drum your pains and fever disappear at once'.

At Jhakri Raunu gave us some examples of how angry parents talk to their children. Here is a mother telling her daughter what she thinks of her: 'You *jutâki*, why can't you work? If you don't begin to use your limbs now, what will you do later?' And the girl replies, 'Why are you always bothering me? If you don't want to give me food, don't; if I have got to starve, I will starve, or I will go away and beg'. Then the father joins in: 'After you are married you are going to ruin our name; you will go changing from husband to husband, for not one will put up with your idleness; and everywhere you go people will laugh at us. Has not your mother taught you to do anything but to dance in the ghotul? Must you spend all your life in the ghotul? You cannot even cook the rice properly.'

In the same way the mother says to the son, 'Why can't you go to the fields? Why can't you look after the bullocks? Your one desire is to eat without moving your limbs; your hands and feet are broken. Yet this is your own house; this is your own property; how are you going to look after it when we are dead? How are you going to bury us properly if you never do any work?'

But the Muria believe that the mother is generally very kind and loving to her son. As Nari said at Nayanar, 'The father is always saying to himself that the girl is going to leave him and go to her husband's house and therefore he is tender to her, but the mother does not seem to mind her going away. She thinks of her own reputation. Unless she is nasty to the girl, she cannot teach her anything and so she has to nag her continually'.

These quarrels about work lead, in a few rare cases, to the serious consequence of suicide. During the past ten years there have been 20 suicides among the Muria of the ghotul area, and a study of the causes leading to them confirms what I have written in this chapter. The suicides have been due to the following causes.

| Cause of Suicide | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Insanity .. .. .. | 2 | 10 |
| Sickness .. .. .. | 3 | 15 |
| Fear due to breach of tribal rules .. | 1 | 5 |
| Fear of prosecution .. .. | 1 | 5 |
| Conflict with parents over marriage .. | 2 | 10 |
| Sorrow for the death of a son .. .. | 1 | 5 |
| Quarrel over childlessness .. .. | 1 | 5 |
| Quarrels about work .. .. | 9 | 45 |

This is a very small number of suicides, only 2 a year, for so large a population, working out at about 20 to the million annually. The method of suicide, in every case but one, was hanging; the single exception was the young wife who drowned herself at Korhabera.

The suicides due to quarrels and disputes number 12, or 60 per cent. This, which would be surprising in other communities, is less so here in view of what we have seen of the sense of outrage that a quarrel gives to a Muria.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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## THE GHOTUL AND RELIGION

### III. The Stilt Festival

The use of stilts during the rains is a semi-religious practice common throughout Middle India and no doubt elsewhere.[1] It has been suggested that it has some magical significance aimed at encouraging the crops to grow.

'The Geeree', says Colonel Ward, describing the custom in Mandla, 'can hardly be called a festival: it is remarkable more for its absurdity than anything else, and is left to the children to celebrate. This they do by walking about the place on stilts for some days, praising the institution of the Geeree, or stilts, as placing them above the necessity of walking in the mud; and finally, proceeding in procession to the Nerbudda, they throw the stilts in and return to their homes.'[2]

The chelik have similar, but more fully developed, customs. The stilts are made of two poles of either ghotiya or sarai about 6' high, to which foot-rests are attached 2' from the ground. These are made of hollowed bits of char wood which are filled with pebbles and fixed together round the poles either by nails or small wooden pegs. The stilts are made early in the rains at the Amavas Pandum which corresponds to the Hareli festival of the Hindus. During the rains, the chelik constantly walk about on their stilts making a great deal of noise as the pebbles inside the hollowed foot-rests rattle about. The only game they play on the stilts is stilt-fighting when they attack each other and try to bump each other off.[3] They become expert in lifting one of the stilts off the ground and hitting another boy with it. They are also able to do very clever solo dances, hopping on one leg with the other raised from the ground.

Stilt-walking is permitted for a couple of months during the rains from the time of the Amavas Pandum until after the first New Eating ceremony in the middle of August or a little later. This is called the Korta Tindana in Gondi and on the second day of the festival, which is known as the Hara Tindana or the day on which the people eat the leavings of the food that remained after the big day of the festival, a special ceremony takes place in connexion with the stilts. After this day it is taboo to use stilts at all. Grigson adds that among the Hill Maria there is a rule that stilt-walking is not only taboo during the rest of the year but also every fourth year.[4]

On the second day of the Korta Tindana the chelik assemble and go round the village on their stilts holding bursundi plants in their hands. They dance in front of each house in turn begging for rice, eggs, liquor and money and sing,

*Lāya dāya loo loon thi,*
*Rai hoda beda the*
*Nēna daha dharthe,*
*Gandri bursundi pāra pāra.*

This may be freely translated, 'O stinking mosquitoes, run away to the fields of rai before our feet touch the threshold, for with branches we are hunting

[1] As, for example, by the Angami and Ao Naga, the Kuki and Kachari, and the Marquesans. (See Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, p. 155 and J. G. Frazer, *Belief in Immortality* (London, 1913), Vol. II, pp. 339f. Russell gives photographs of Hindu boys on stilts (op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 42 and 46) and describes the custom briefly at Vol. IV, p. 111.

[2] H. C. E. Ward, *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District* (Bombay, 1870), p. 64. Compare E. M. Gordon, 'Notes concerning the People of Mungeli Tahsil, Bilaspore District' in *JASBeng.*, *New Series*, Vol. I (1905), p. 195.

[3] The Angami Naga, like the Marquesan Islanders, play a game on stilts in which the combatants try to balance on one stilt and trip up their opponents with the other. See J. H. Hutton, 'Assam and the Pacific', *Man in India*, Vol. IV (1924), p. 6.

[4] Grigson, op. cit., p. 140.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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Man and wife generally settle down at first in a small hut of their own. But there is a sort of joint family system with the father or elder brother as the patriarchal head, and sometimes a large family occupies an entire hamlet of its own in one part of the village territory. The institution of the cross-cousin marriage tends to unite families very closely.

This happy and united family life is disturbed by several causes. One, as we have seen, is the commonplace invasion of the happiness of two people by a third. Another is the presence of the husband's younger brother in the house, and the privileged relationship which he has with the elder brother's wife. Another is the custom that allows a married girl to visit her mother's house. Yet another is man's insatiable passion for domestic experiment which leads to the complicated and dubious joys of plural marriage.

It will be of interest to compare with this the situation in ordinary Hindu families, where the common disparity of age between husband and wife creates stresses from which the Maria are free. 'There are tendencies at work within the family institution itself which sometimes lead to criminal action. The joint family rests upon the mutual toleration and sacrifice of the different members of the household. While forbearance is the outcome of long discipline in joint family life, it is put to a severe test as a result of the growth of individualism. Again, the disparity between the ages of husband and wife, of parents-in-law and girl-wife, offers opportunities of exploitation and even cruelty. The custom of infant marriage is apt to promote oppression, especially where there is a striking difference in age between the husband and the wife. Cases of cruelty to young wives are often brought to the courts in India.

'In 1929 a Hindu weaver in Hyderabad, who had married a young girl, chained her like an animal to a big mill-stone to prevent her making frequent attempts to run away. She subsequently died.

'In another case in the same year a young girl-wife who was being forcibly taken to her husband's house managed to free herself, jumped into a wayside well, and was drowned'.[1]

[1] Haikerwal, op. cit., p. 35.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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told everyone who knew anything about the matter to make a report of suicide, and since he was a man of great influence this was done.

The remarkable thing about this case is not the violence with which the murder was committed, but the very great forbearance shown by Poda. After forgiving Kopa the first time, he himself went to the expense of marrying him to a young girl, perhaps with the idea that this would divert his attention. Even on the second occasion he refrained from physical violence, and contented himself with turning the boy out of his house. Few Maria would have failed to kill Kopa immediately after discovering him in the house at night. But all Poda did was to put the matter before the village elders. It seems to have been Kopa's impertinence in going to the hut and sitting there as if nothing had happened that suddenly deprived Poda of his self-control. The Court, taking these matters into consideration, sentenced him to only five years' imprisonment.

VI

## THE MOTHER'S HOUSE

Another very common source of domestic friction is the custom that allows a girl to visit her mother's house. These visits are an exciting and important part in the life of every aboriginal girl. During her marriage ceremony many of the songs deal with the happiness of her childhood home, and the misery of a life with a husband under the domination of her parents-in-law. After marriage the mother's house acquires a sweet and romantic memory. Its hardships and quarrels are easily forgotten, and the love of one's own parents appears tender and kind compared to the constant friction of the new home. It is generally considered correct for girls to go to their parents' house for important domestic events such as the ceremonies for the birth of children, marriages and funerals, for some of the chief festivals and to help in the more urgent work of the fields. Husbands, especially young husbands, resent this, for it means one pair of hands the less to work in their own house. Girls are not always very tactful in the enthusiasm they show at returning

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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574 593 to their old homes, and some girls make a regular habit of going there, far too often for the comfort of their husbands.

574 578 There have been several suicides arising out of this situation, but only one of our hundred murders. This was the tragedy of Habka Masa who, when I saw him in jail, was a sad gaunt man utterly crushed by the tragedy that had befallen him. He had been married to his wife Pakli for some three years, and was living with his old blind parents at Hallur in the Kutru Zamindari. In June his wife went home to Gangalur for the Pen Karsita festival. Masa insisted on going with her. Two days after the festival, Masa told his father-in-law that he wanted to go back to his house, for it was the beginning of the rains and there was a lot to do. The older man was agreeable, and gave him the customary clothes and a basket of oil-seed, which is the usual present to a son-in-law when he leaves the house. But Pakli refused to go. Her parents were on the point of going to work as coolies, and she wanted to go with them. Masa, fearing that he might lose his wife altogether, decided to accompany her. The party set out and went to Gidam, a prosperous little country town on the main road, and again Masa tried to get his wife to go home. From Gidam they went to Tirthum and worked at the construction of a bridge for the P.W.D. When the bridge was ready, they all went on to Silakjhori where they got work as farm-servants. The parents-in-law built a little hut for themselves, and Masa and Pakli occupied a deserted hut belonging to sawyers. From the day of their arrival there were constant quarrels between Masa and his wife, for Masa was anxious about his cultivation—he was the only able-bodied man in the family. Pakli used to put forward every possible excuse for not going back. One day it was raining heavily. The next the rivers were flooded and she was afraid to cross them. A third day she promised to go when the rains were over.

On the night of 10 July 1939, there was heavy rain and a strong wind. After supper with the family Masa and Pakli struggled through the wind to their little hut. According to Masa's own account they then began to quarrel violently. He again asked Pakli to go home and she refused. Then he asked her to give him some tobacco, or, in other words, to have intercourse with him, and this also she

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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Kuakonda. When Telami Dhurwa returned from jail after 763
killing a man in a drunken quarrel, he offered his clan-god Uru Maru, a pig, a cow and a hen, and had to undergo the usual ceremonies of purification.

Apart from these ceremonies, however, the fact that a man 554 558
has served a sentence for murder has singularly little influence on his social position and domestic happiness. It is true that imprisonment, if it is for a very long term, sometimes acts as an automatic divorce, and women feel that they are at liberty to marry again. But generally wives wait for their husbands to be released, as I found Deve, the wife of Kawasi Borga, waiting for her husband at Doriras. Borga, ten years before, had gone to jail with a life-sentence for killing his uncle. His wife had all the time been well looked after by the villagers, and I found her house substantial and prosperous. Her two sons had been successfully married and were carrying on the business of their home with the help of their wives.

People, however, are sometimes afraid to marry a released 554
murderer. Doga of Jabeli must be one of the luckiest young 582
men alive, for after being sentenced to transportation for one murder he was released after three years; whereupon he is said to have killed his wife, was sentenced to death and again got off on appeal. He came to see me armed with a ferocious-looking axe, which had actually been put in evidence at one of his trials as the weapon with which he had committed murder. He was trying to get a new wife, but without success. 'They are all afraid of me', he said, 'for fear I might kill them as well'. But he thought he might possibly get a widow. Another youth who found it very difficult to get a new wife was Hemla Bakka, who killed his wife for committing adultery, and got three years' imprisonment for it. At Aranpur all the girls were frightened of the charming Gutte, who had been in jail for killing a man in a drunken quarrel after a cock-fight. They thought if they displeased him, he might murder them too.

At Khutepal, Oyami Masa, who was imprisoned for killing 554
his junior wife, seems to have suffered no loss of prestige on 558
account of it. He is a Waddai, and when I was there he